

Recent U.S. History | Worksheet



Name: _____ Date: _____

YOUR MISSION: PRODUCE THE DOCUMENTARY. A studio has hired you to produce “The American Century”—the story of a nation tested by world wars, a depression, a decades-long struggle against communism, and a September morning no one will forget. Watch the episode, then execute the tasks as you take on more responsibility.

Level 1 | RESEARCHER—Build the Archive

Every documentary starts in the archive. As you watch, match each item to its meaning—write the letter in the blank.

1. ____ Woodrow Wilson	A. The Hawaii naval base Japan attacked on December 7, 1941—pulling America into World War II
2. ____ Franklin D. Roosevelt	B. President during World War I
3. ____ Pearl Harbor	C. The day Islamic terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing thousands
4. ____ Dwight Eisenhower	D. The long struggle to stop the spread of communism
5. ____ The Cold War	E. President during the Great Depression and World War II
6. ____ The Civil Rights Movement	F. The effort from the early 1950s through late 1960s to end racial discrimination
7. ____ Martin Luther King Jr.	G. The most notable leader of the Civil Rights Movement, shot and killed in 1968
8. ____ September 11, 2001	H. Army general in World War II who became president

Level 2 | FILM EDITOR—Cut the Reel

Disaster in the editing bay—the century’s footage is out of order. Number the scenes 1– 8 so the film runs in the order in which the events happened. (Two cuts are tricky: watch the dates.)

- ____ Japan bombs Pearl Harbor and the United States enters World War II.
- ____ World War I begins in Europe.
- ____ The Civil Rights Movement works to end racial discrimination at home.
- ____ The Great Depression brings hardship to millions across the world.
- ____ September 11, 2001: terrorists attack and Americans come together.
- ____ The United States enters World War I.
- ____ World War II ends in victory for the Allies.
- ____ The Cold War begins, and America fights to stop communism’s spread in Asia.

Scan to watch episode:



Level 3 | STORY DEPARTMENT—Two Systems

The heart of your film is a contrast. Using only evidence from the episode, complete the chart—then answer the story department’s big question.

	AMERICA	COMMUNISM
Where rights come from		
Who controls business, the economy, and daily life		
What happens to people who disagree		

The big question: Why did the United States enter wars in Korea and Vietnam?

Level 4 | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER—The Closing Narration

The final scene needs your voice. Write the 60-second closing narration (4– 6 sentences) that will play over the film’s last images. Choose one ending: (a) September 11 and how Americans answered it, or (b) the one event the century should be remembered by—your choice, defended. Include all three—check each box as you use it:

☐ The event and what happened ☐ What it revealed about America ☐ Why it still matters

My ending (circle one): (a) September 11; (b) The event I chose: _____

Rank achieved: ☐ Researcher ☐ Film Editor ☐ Story Dept. ☐ Exec. Producer

Answer Key | Recent U.S. History

Level 1 | Researcher

1-B, 2-E, 3-A, 4-H, 5-D, 6-F, 7-G, 8-C

Level 2 | Film Editor—Cut the Reel

Order (top to bottom): 4, 1, 7, 3, 8, 2, 5, 6. (World War I begins 1914 → U.S. enters 1917 → Great Depression → Pearl Harbor 1941 → World War II ends 1945 → Cold War, Asia → Civil Rights Movement → September 11, 2001.) **The tricky cuts:** the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, about three years after the war began; and Korea and Vietnam belong to the Cold War era, after World War II.

Level 3 | Story Department—Two Systems

1. **Where rights come from—America:** rights—like life, liberty, and property—are God-given and enshrined in the foundations of U.S. society and government. **Communism:** rights are whatever the state allows; fundamental rights are denied.
2. **Who controls daily life—America:** free citizens; government power is limited. **Communism:** the government controls all levels of society—from business and the economy to families and individuals.
3. **Those who disagree—America:** disagreement is protected; citizens may speak, publish, and challenge their government. **Communism:** citizens are brutalized, and even killed, to advance the agenda of the state.
4. **The big question—sample answer:** The United States feared the spread of communism into Korea and Vietnam and entered those wars to support liberty and democracy—resisting a system that denies the God-given rights America was founded to protect. Look for “stop the spread of communism” plus the why: defending liberty, not just opposing an enemy.

Level 4 | Executive Producer—The Closing Narration

Narrations will vary. Mark student responses correct if the narration accurately covers (1) the event—for option (a): 19 Islamic terrorists hijacked airplanes and attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, a fourth plane crashing in Pennsylvania after passengers courageously fought back, killing thousands of innocent Americans; (2) what it revealed about America—the attack tested the nation like never before, but did not destroy it: Americans came together to preserve the ideals of American democracy; and (3) why it still matters. For option (b), any episode event qualifies if the student defends the choice on all three counts. Look for narration written to be spoken—strong closing lines earn applause.

Note: This worksheet can be completed with the episode alone or as part of the full lesson—see the accompanying lesson plan.